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Executive Registry

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable James R. Schlesinger
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT : Recent Statement of West German Defense Minister
Georg Leber in Defense of the U.S. Role in Vietnam

1. On 5 April 1975 the West German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine carried a vigorous statement by Defense Minister Georg Leber in support of the U.S. role in Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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2. I believe Leber's statement will also be of interest to you.
A translation of the full text follows:

"News from the Far East makes the world shudder almost daily, in view of the misery--and many forms, ranging from hunger to naked death--which faces millions driven to flight or to despair. In this situation it is understandable that people call for help and think about helping. Questions are also raised and many things become confused.

"Does what is happening there before the eyes of all of us, which stirs people in the free world--but surely only in the free world--is it something that could not have been foreseen, or is it the inevitable result of worldwide campaign that has gone on for years? Those who suggested such possible consequences at an earlier stage, when it was not so late, were branded as 'cold warriors.' For years hardly a day or an event passed during which it was not considered proper to raise charges against the Americans because they had engaged themselves in Vietnam. They were considered criminals because they sought to keep the tide of communism away from South Vietnam. But they were there because they knew the South Vietnamese alone could not do it. Where are all these people now who, on moral grounds, criticized and scolded the Americans? A point has been reached where people who used to call 'Ami go home' now ask whether one can still trust the Americans, whether one can rely on them, whether their word is still good and whether one should not fear for our own situation and the situation of Europe.

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"Only one thing can be of help here, namely to see clearly and soberly that what is happening now in East Asia is an inevitable consequence many people called for, even if they did not anticipate and do not want what is inevitably happening and will continue to happen until the bitter end. Then it will indeed become quiet there, an awful quiet, but enlightening if one has the courage to think beyond the inferno of war.

"What is bad, in addition to the disaster there, is the naivete of many people who now question the reliability of the Americans and expect them, openly or in disguised form, to prevent or to ease what was bound to happen sooner or later after the Americans, yielding to pressure from a worldwide mood and to currents of opinion at home, left Vietnam to itself. And it is bad that in this situation, no one raises his voice to oppose the communists with the same moral quality and conviction with which one opposed the Americans while they were in Vietnam. It apparently is considered quite natural and proper that the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese communists through force of arms and war cause misery and despair for millions in South Vietnam.

"No one questions whether one can believe communists talking peace, as they did when concluding the Agreement of Paris. Rather, the question being asked now is whether one can believe the Americans. Thus is the individual conscience restored to balance, and one learns again to live with oneself. Then there remains only the question of making some additional contributions in terms of medical supplies and baby food so that, as a refined citizen, one can be entirely pleased with himself.

"To prevent developments from leading to further destruction, we must draw at least some conclusions for the future. The most important ones are the following:

"1) Our real conditions of life, unfortunately, are not determined by idealists or by people acting fundamentally on the basis of ethics and morals--unless they can make their own ideas of ethics and morals prevail. The course of world development will be determined for them by arms.

"2) So-called co-existence between communism and the world of free choice exists for the expansionist community ideology only so long as pluralistic views of life--above

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all the existence of an opposing ideology--cannot be overcome. If it is possible to overcome the western way of life without using arms, attempts at this will be made in the future, in all parts of the world, without resort to arms. If no risks are involved and if it is considered opportune (by the communists), they do not hesitate and will not hesitate in the future to resort to sword and fire to spread their ideology. That is what we are witnessing in Vietnam and Cambodia today and what we may soon experience elsewhere when Vietnam and Cambodia have met their fate.

"3) This confrontation will continue and the West will survive only if people know the peril they face and if they are ready to do what is necessary to protect ourselves. That includes being aware of the values of the free way of life, which must refrain from undermining and damaging itself. That means realizing that, in spite of shortcomings in our own country, our way of life and what we have created is worth preserving and protecting. That includes the readiness to make sacrifices for the preservation of freedom and independence. Even America cannot prevent a nation from losing its freedom if the nation itself is not ready to make an adequate contribution.

"Such a contribution includes continuing efforts to strengthen the community of free people of the West. Here mutual trust is becoming of even greater importance in our times than it was during many a phase in the past. If these efforts fail, if mistrust spreads, we can then number the days that Western Europe remains free and independent to shape its fate according to its own ideas."

7s/ Bill

W. E. Colby
Director

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